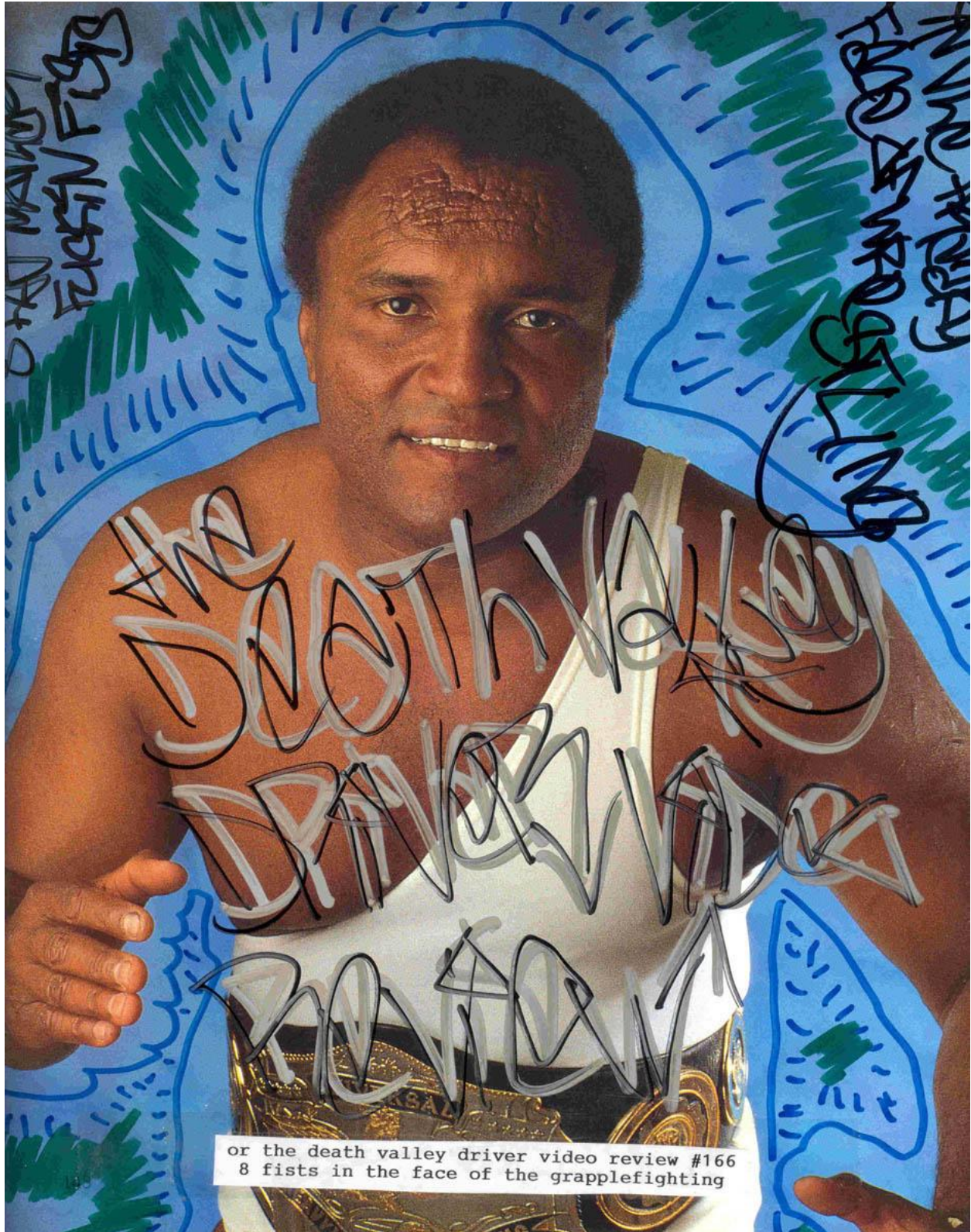




WELCOME TO THE DEATH VALLEY DRIVER VIDEO REVIEW #166!

Your cover is by the lovely and talented Raven Mack.

Your playaz are in a reveiwing frenzy. Well, Tom and Phil are in a reviewing frenzy so we are blowing this baby out so they don't get too backlogged. My love with Mammoth Sasaki on the rocks? Find out the whole sordid story...

NOAH 4/1/2007

[TOM K/ PHIL SCHNEIDER]

Tsutomu Hirayanagi vs. Akihiko Ito:

TKG: I really like Japanese rookie matches. Stuff worked really simple and well. These guys have been around for a while but still are working in the opening rookie match spot. I really dug the first seven minutes of this. Ito's knees into grounded hammerlock were really nice looking. Lots of nice looking stuff in first section. But it really felt like it should have ended around the seven minute point. Someone gets a half crab and it ends. Instead they just had a ton of nearfalls. How many nearfalls is it going to take to put away one of these young guys? Too many nearfalls for an opener. Big DDT doesn't do it, you need a top rope DDT to put away the guy who just came back from injury?

PAS: 2.9 section is really wrong for an opening rookie match. This really felt like both guys were trying to get Ian to invite them back to IWA Mid-South. They are supposed to be showing progression, adding and improving. Rookies shouldn't be doing shorter versions of main event matches.

Kentaro Shiga & Kishin Kawabata vs. Mitsuo Momota & Taiji Ishimori:

PAS: Really a two man match, as the Kawabata v. Momota sections were pretty fun. Especially the chop exchanges with Kawabata chopping Momota and Momota getting revenge. Ishimori looked fine, although didn't do much. Shiga looked awful, he may be the worst current NOAH guy as he looked totally uncoordinated and unable to take or deliver anything.

TKG: The sections where Momota headbutted or chopped at Shiga weren't bad. But damnit you don't want Shiga on offense, and you sure as hell don't want to ever match Shiga and Ishimori up. Phil's "maybe" seems a bit nice, Shiga is the worst Noah regular. The finish, kick to midsection into backslide finish wasn't well done, either.

Tamon Honda & Tsuyoshi Kikuchi vs. IZU & Makoto Hashi:

PAS: NOAH has kind of a goofy thing where four of their midcarders all work "hard head stiff headbutt" gimmicks. This was the tag war of hard headed midcarders, and thus had 73 headbutts- about 4 a minute on average. Although honestly it actually felt like there should have been more. Kikuchi really takes a Kikuchi level beating, as IZU busts him open with the hardest of the 73 headbutts, and also busts his mouth with a lariat. After the IZUbutt Kikuchi really looks even more concussed then usual. Hashi looked a little shook too, both IZU and Honda have the

freakishly giant heads which allow them to land 60 headbutts a match, Kikuchi and Hashi have normal sized head, so maybe should try a different tact.

TKG: Phil is normally the guy you go to for Honda praise but for some reason he's left that for me. Honda was an absolute beast in this just throwing great clotheslines, teasing the Olympic hell, throwing amazing suplexes, etc. The bulk of this match was built around Honda v. Hashi with really IZU and Kikuchi doing occasional guest spots but pretty much staying out of the way for the first 11/12 minutes.

Kotaro Suzuki/ Ricky Marvin vs Yoshinobu Kanemaru/Atsushi Aoki:

TKG: When exactly did Kanemaru get that ridiculous perm? Aoki also has some flowing hair and the two really look like they were working a seventies cop show parody gimmick. Kanemura was once a guy who I remember being very expressive and really getting over his persona of scummy guy who will low blow his opponent. Here he just looks indifferent for the whole match and it really hurts everything. Marvin taunts Kanemura by holding out Aoki's hand for tag and Kanemura can't be bothered to get upset. Suzuki tombstones Kanemura and he can't be bothered to care there either. I kind of dug Aoki as he does nice job eating stuff and I am a big fan of continual headlock spots (although they're better if you aren't obviously calling spots in them). Ricky Marvin's work over Aoki's leg was great and their final segment together was a pretty spectacular finish.

PAS: I think Kanemaru's hair makes him look more like Shampoo era Warren Beatty. This definitely isn't a title match, as this is your Marvin/Suzuki tag match with out your insane "top this finish" run. Marvin is amazing at little things too though, as all of his knee work on Aoki is great, and Aoki sells it really well. It does appear that C.M. Punk and NOAH made an exchange, he took KENTA spots and traded Aoki his trademark chinlock spot call. Talk about your smallpox infected blankets.

Akitoshi Saito/KENTA/ Ippei Ota vs Brian Danielson/Joe Legend/Ted DiBiase Jr.:

PAS: Hey American Dragon is back, and he is still American Dragon level awesome. He Fuchis it out with Ota, twisting him into to painful pretzels. When Just Joe breaks Ota's nose, Danielson immediately starts punching it and grinding his fist on it. He also has great exchanges with both KENTA and Saito. The rest of his team was less good. DiBiase Jr. is just basically doing all of his father's spots poorly, including totally indy wrestling out the Million Dollar Dream, turning into a slam and a camel clutch, I am shocked he didn't turn it into a lungblower. Just Joe seems to be doing a pastiche of other over Americans in Japan. My favorite is him doing all of Hansen's mannerisms before hitting a super shitty clothesline. Still American Dragon is American Dragon.

TKG: American Dragon as Fuchi was pretty great. DiBiase Jr really looks awkward at this point. He throws a really bad fist drop and lands all the flat back bumps without tucking in his head. Also he really facially looks like Dr. Tom Pritchard. Did the Doctor of Desire cuckold DiBiasse. It's really distracting. Match was built around American's vs. Ota and really needed more Saito.

Akira Taue/Masao Inoue vs Bison Smith/Daniel Cross:

TKG: I think Daniel Cross is a Harley Race trainee. Not as good as Trevor Murdoch or Matt Murphy. Maybe better than Jason Goodecker and definitely better than Jason Bates or Bull Schmidt. His offense is somewhat questionable. He does a bunch of Harley Raceish spots not executed as well as Harley Race, but he also does some over the top absolutely goofball Harley Race bobbing head comedy selling. This match is all built around Inoue's eye rakes and Cross is completely blinded by the rakes, taking bumps off the apron to the floor for them, hurting his knee and doing stooging dancing as a result of them. Taue joins in on the eye-rake-Cross fest to big pops. When Cross eventually is able to eye rake Inoue back it's this great moment as he looks like he just won the Super Bowl. If he isn't wrestling Ricky Marvin you don't want to see Bison Smith.

PAS: Cross also has an amazing goatee where it looks like his goatee has mutton chops. He and Bison together look like a Neo-Nazi meth dealing biker gang. I think TNA should bring them in, working the Samoan Gangsta Party role to Don Harris's "Make a Difference" Fatu. He is trying to make a normal life working security, and they are trying to drag him back.

Mitsuharu Misawa/Yoshinari Ogawa/Go Shiosaki vs Takuma Sano/Naomichi Marufuji/Takashi Sugiura:

TKG: And this is the match of the show thus far. High end NOAH is all about roles and characters. And this match is made by Misawa's character. Misawa is an old broken down guy who is pissed that he still has to be on top. Pissed that no one has managed to get over enough that he can step aside. He wants to retire to Florida but no one has stepped up for him to leave the business to. He's the anti-Verne Gagne. He isn't desperately holding on, he desperately wants to get out. And every bit of this match is informed by that character. Misawa looks absolutely disgusted, just pissed to even be there. It isn't that he looks indifferent or disinterested, he looks like he actively doesn't want to be there but yet feels morally/socially obligated to go to work. I really liked the last match that set up Sano GHC challenge (Akiyama v. Sano). The actual GHC challenge wasn't any good but the setup for it was great as it really established that Sano is a guy who can break your ribs. This whole match is built around Sano wasting people with his rolling savate kick (the Ringo Mendoza/Zbysco kick). And Misawa sells it like an old constipated man who hasn't been able to stool for three days. All the Sano v Misawa interactions really made me want to see the GHC title match. Secondary story in this match is Ogawa's absolute contempt for Marufuji: "You think you're so special...Man I was the GHC title holder that no one took seriously because I was an underdog junior who won matches with roll-ups long before you came along." And I kind of left this match also wanting to see that as a singles match-up. The problem with this match was that too much time was spent on Shiosaki who really is an extraneous guy. He was too competitive with Sano and the ending dueling Shiosake/Marufuji superkick sections really felt like someone dropped a Lance Storm vs Justin Credible match in the middle of a NOAH ring. That kind of meaningless moves stuff is out of place in this storyline/character based fed.

PAS: This also left me really wanting to see the title match. Sano just wrecks Misawa every time he is in there with him. Busting up his belly, spin kicking him in his face. Just owning him. Which is how you want to set up a guy for a title match. Misawa is broken down, finished basically, and

here comes another mountain for him to climb. Sano is an easy guy to heat up, because everything he does looks so nasty. Compare this to the video game shit Shiosaki and Marufuji were doing, moonsault miss, thrust kick exchange, big suplex, fucking trapped arm Shirunai. That interaction doesn't make me want to see those two go at it, I kind of saw it. A singles match would be like that, except with some move to the floor and five minutes of perfunctory matwork.

Takeshi Morishima/Mohammed Yone vs Jun Akiyama/Takeshi Rikio:

PAS: This didn't have the deep story that your real high end NOAH tags have, but for big guys pounding on each other it was pretty class. They really did a lot of matching up, with Yone and Akiyama really pairing off, and the double Takeshis really going after each other. I always enjoy fat guys slapping each other and these were a pair of fat guys throwing slaps. Yone and Akiyama came off their awesome 4 minute match on the last big NOAH show by going after each other here. There were a couple of off parts, the big running spot in the crowd took to long to set up and didn't come off good, and there was a section where Rikio and Yone were brawling on the floor where both guys looked completely lost. Your big run was pretty great with the highlight being Rikio countering the doomsday device spinkick by crushing Morishima with a short arm lariat.

TKG: GAWD Morishima needs to drop that cartwheel back elbow. It feels like Rikio/Akiyama is going to be a tag team that I'm really going to enjoy. Like Phil said this was match where guys really paired off for the most part. Takeshi v Takeshi is always good and Akiyama v Yone is a blast. When they switched things for the most part stayed at full throttle. I didn't have any problem with the big running spots in the crowd. That's kind of a Yone signature comedy deal...and they had the partner holding opponent in place. I kept on waiting for it to turn into a tag team accidental collision spot. The one street fight section between Rikio and Yone that Phil mentions was weird. It really felt like two guys going "Hey the cameras are off during this commercial break...lets not do anything until they're back on us".

~@~

DVDVR ROAD REPORT- ROH- EDISON, NEW JERSEY 4/14/2007

DHR: DEAN RASMUSSEN, Italian omlette/Manny Fernandez comp/ Weird ass French possibly Belgian wrestling tape that will hit the board soon

PAS: PHIL SCHNEIDER, Reuben sammich, Nakajima comp

RN: ROB NAYLOR, Arby's Roast Beef Sandwich/Random NWA Va and FIP with Strong vs. Evans

TKG:TOM KARRO-GARSNER, Italian sausage sandwich and finally found the Central States.

+++++

DHR: Phil and Tom called me around the first week of April and said, "Hey grampa [or maybe it was "old man"]], drive us up to Jersey and we'll pay for your gas and your ticket...and... (away from the phone)... sure, what the fuck... AND dinner." Being a jillion years old and married and having to tend to my four kids, I knew it would be tricky. BUT I also knew that it was two days from my birthday and hell, I assume my wife can use any break from my annoying idiocy that she can get THUS the next day, I get the greenlight. My wife and I figured that it would be

cheaper rent a Gulfstream private jet to fly us all there than to take the Grand Caravan up the Jersey turnpike so renting a ass-stompingly awesome 2007 Chevy Impala for the weekend would be like getting there for free. I show up at Phil's Friday night and we have a couple of beers and talk about life and the ladies and the professional wrestling. Lee Benaka shows up and we talk about his Country band (who REALLY fucking rule I found out as we listened to the cd on the way up). Tom shows up and we catch up on the endless onslaught of wrestling that Tom and Phil plow through in a usual week- as they tend work very little and spend every waking hour that isn't involved in mounting mysterious ladies or going to see Go-Go or Sensitive Alternative Bands watching hours upon hours upon hours of wrestling. We get drunk and watch a fucking awwesome El Dandy/Emilio Charles match from 88 or 91 or something. I go to sleep. We wake up, look through every single videotape Phil owns for some reason and then drive all over New Jersey looking for the Edison diner and opt to go after the match so's we don't miss the added attraction of Damien fuckin motherfuckin Wayne's try-out match. What a great fuckin weekend.

REX STERLING vs MITCH FRANKLIN:

DHR: This is the second Rex Sterling match i've seen and he should really ditch the jumpy flipping Indy little guy 2007 offense and concentrate on being the annoying bastard he can be. He can get you to really hate him and the diminutive Mitch Franklin was the lucky recipient of the Sterling ability to make you want SOMEBODY to punch him in the face. Sterling could be a keeper.

PAS: I thought Sterling was fine here, and he is a guy I have liked in NWA-VA, but honestly this promotion already has a dozen tiny guys with 2nd tier flying offense. Only role I really see him in, is a role which could be easily filled by one of their students. I imagine Sterling will be really good in a year or two and then may be able to bring something else to the table.

RN: I think Mitch looked better than Sterling here. I just couldn't get into anything Sterling did. I think the ROH students looked awesome vs. the NWA VA guys also. Phil during this match said "Mitch took all the offense", but honestly, I think most of Sterling's offense was unmemorable to begin with. The finish was great.

TKG: This would be the third Sterling match I've seen live (the prior two both being on the same show), and I think I dug what Sterling brought more than anyone else. He does some really great Nellie Olsen on Little House on the Prairie heel mugging. And some guy in the audience in front of me says "weird this guy is doing face/heel stuff in a tryout match?", like tryouts are just about showing off spots. Sterling doesn't really do a ton of the flippy and just pretty much works as detestable junior with really good timing. Schenieder is right in that it is the role that they already have Hagardorn doing, but get the sense that if you tagged Sterling up with Hagadorn. I would actually look forward to Hag matches.

DAMIEN WAYNE vs RHETT TITUS:

DHR: Mr Mid-Atlantic had a good little try-out match- punching well, selling like he's a Southern wrestler, setting up Titus' iffy looking punches really well. Wayne obviously didn't really get a

chance to show off his pretty expansive offense but hit a sweet Alabama Jam for the finish and did the great thing of hitting the toprope legdrop off the apron and sold the self-inflicted damage like a fucking KING. They need to sign him and they need to sign Preston Quinn and they need to have them feud forever with Jack Evans and Delirious.

PAS: Damine Wayne is a keeper- though this was only a tiny bit of what he can do and this was still better than any student match I have seen. Solid slick stuff and the apron legdrop is a great crazy spot which got the crowd into it. I would bring in the entire OSE and have them feud with all of the fake Japanese english stables. PQ and DW beating the shit out of Resilience would warm my heart.

RN: I'll have to disagree with my elder DEAN, as I thought Rhett Titus' bodypunches were equally good as Wayne's sweeping Jake Roberts style. Both had great contact and looked real. Wayne didn't do too much of his offense, but shine in that he had great presence, jawed with the people and picked his spots. The Legdrop from the top to the ropes outside (think Black Bart vs. Sam Houston for the Mid-Atlantic title finish, but taken to the next level) was cool as shit. The finishing Top Rope legdrop looked great too. Wayne definitely needs to be back for the next Edison show, hopefully with Preston Quinn, who I'm a fan of now.

TKG: Not a ton to add here, but they teased a ten minute draw and really had the crowd into this.

JASON BLADE/ EDDIE EDWARDS vs. CHRIS HERO/TANK TOLAND:

DHR: I remember thinking this was good when it was over then the rest of the card unfolded and the memory of details of this match faded into the ether.

PAS: DEAN is getting old and senile, this was shockingly great. Hero and Toland have tremendous shtick and Toland especially looks solid and professional in a way that a lot of the more hyped guys on this show don't. There may be something to OVW and WWE house show scheduling after all. Edwards and Blade are pretty bland, but they are perfectly fine bland guys playing a role in Toland and Hero's show. There was a pretty big reaction when they won, so they got over enough by the end.

RN: This was outstanding. On paper, Eddie Edwards and Jason Blade are horrible. Add Hero and Toland to that paper and you have one hell of a match. Hero was fantastic here, doing all kinds of stuff to get heat, like the nip up MANIA ala Shiryu and just some great punches and kicks. Toland was awesome too, bringing out fitness equipment and incorporating it into his offense. I liked the Workout RESISTENCE Bands camel clutch best myself. Together, these dudes are a riot. I can only imagine how great they were the night prior with Sweeney in tow. Toland/Hero uncorked a cool spot with a hard double boot to the head followed by a Spinebuster variation. The finish saw Blade and Edwards win after a miscommunication from Hero and Toland the old Sunset Flip grip hands failing deal. Great finish, people popped huge when Hero and Toland lost, which is great, since they were trying to cheer them as "cool heels"

during the match, so maybe it was a piece of booking designed to feed into them being people fans are supposed to boo. Hopefully it works.

TKG: The Toland/Hero team are pretty spectacular in role of top notch heels vs. random faces with a flip and superkick. Toland's 3 ft tall comedy power offense was pretty spectacular and the dynamic between Toland and the less muscular Hero was pretty great. I hope they keep the Hero/Toland team together for the ROH in Japan shows. I think the Toland/Hero team have enough stuff that they could hide Shiga's weaknesses and have a good match with Shiga/Kawabata. I would buy a DVD with Hero/Toland vs. the IZU/Hashi team, even if there was nothing else I wanted to see on it.

PELLE PRIMEAU vs SHANE HAGADORN.

DHR: Fine rookies match. Sloppy in spots but the spirit was there.

PAS: Not nearly as sloppy as I had seen from these guys in the past. To be fair, they train together so they have probably practiced this, but these guys actually looked like they belonged on the big show. Hagadorn has fun cheap shots, and Pelle takes big bumps. I was especially impressed when Pelle blew the finish, he was able to cover really well and just start punching Hagadorn, so it didn't look blown, and didn't really look repeated. That kind of slick improv isn't even usually there from much more experienced guys.

RN: Pelle is awesome. I really dug this student match and I usually dislike them. Took awhile to get heat...but once they got it, people really got behind Pelle and the pop for his win was huge. Postmatch he was surfed in every section, which I thought was risky for his health, given the strength of the ROH audience...but all was good.

TKG: Yeah this came off really polished with strong face/heel dynamic—heel attacks before bell, lots of simple stuff, good crowd heat...etc.

ROCKY ROMERO vs. CLAUDIO CASTIGLIONI:

DHR: There was so much to hate and so much to love in this match. I actually turned on and got back on board on this match about three times. Claudio didn't beat the shit out of him enough—though there were some brutality and ass-stomping interspersed between the annoyance.

RN: I'm the lone one that enjoyed this from this review I guess. I thought it was good given who was in it. Romero was very cocky and looks the part and just kicked the shit out of Claudio when he got him grounded and did lots of show-offy type stuff like the greco roman knuckle lock turned leap to the ropes rolling necktie headscissors to get CC out of the ring. Romero spat on Claudio and later nearly was DQ'd for spitting on the official. I recall Tom not liking Romero doing Mistico spots.. and I was just like "Dude, Mistico AINT here, I don't care about him and Rocky did some cool shit I thought looked effective". I just don't know why Wayne can bust out Bobby Eaton and Black Bart influenced stuff and Romero can't do some shit Suzuki or Mistico do. He did it in cocky fashion, so I had no issue with it. If Mistico comes to ROH, I'd see a reason to scrap it, but for now, I don't see any issue with it. Romero heeled on Claudio till CC hit

a huuuuuge throw in the air into an uppercut. Romero gets the win and NRC continues to pick up victories once their crew gets together.

TKG: Good gawd does Rocky Romero suck. Dean went back and forth on this match as you had moments where it looked like Claudio would be able to save its bacon but no. This killed me. Romero is all about spotting hot moves and schtick to ape and not understanding the context. Its not that he incorporates the new stuff into his own "character"...he just rolls it out as though he doesn't understand the character of the person he's impersonating or the character he himself is trying to portray. When he first showed up in EMLL he was all about building his matches around aping Minoru Fujita spots but not understanding context. Either the context within which Fujita works or the context of EMLL. He went to New Japan saw that Minoru Suzuki was a guy who got huge pops and so Romero built his ROH matches around two or three Suzuki spots and mannerisms...without any regard to context. Romero reads that Mistico is the WON wrestler of the year and so builds a match where he is shorter heel against tall babyface around four big Mistico spots. Clearly has no understanding of context of Mistico matches and how and why those things work in them...and no understanding of the ROH match he's in either. Naylor's right in that there is no reason not to be "influenced" by other wrestlers. But "influence" suggests htat there is some "core character"being influenced...I don't think Romero has a core. "Influence" suggests understanding wrestling. I don't think Romero has any real understanding.

PAS: Yeah I have no problem with borrowing things, but Romero just seems to put in a tape at random, and decide to do that stuff. I have seen him do Minoru Suzuki heel spots as a tecnico member of a Brazos trios team, Low-Ki kick sequences as a lucha tecnico in a title match, KENTA spots on the undercard of a fucking show KENTA was main eventing, and here he is jacking entire Mistico sequences, except he is the cocky heel. I suppose it might work if he was doing Damien 666's old FMW gimmick, but really it makes him look stupid. I got the sense Claudio was trying to put a match together, but Romero is like an IPOD on random, no way to really make a set out of it.

KEVIN STEEN/EL GENERICO vs. JAY BRISCOE/ERICK STEVENS

DHR: This match was fucking great though it had GIANT flaws. Kevin Steen as complete flaming asshole- as opposed to 56th best physically unimposing highflyer in the indies- is such an inspired move. Erick Stevens was such burly stiff-working motherfucker that I was quite upset that he was booked out of the match after ten minutes.

PAS: I was shocked at how much I enjoyed this. I haven't had much to say about the IWS guys before, and I have actively hated Steen, but he seems to have ditched most of his crap and just become a fat asskicker. With his bad skin and flabby body he does look like every single guy in the audiance though, I am guessing ROH books him for the same reason you book Pedro Morales in NYC, he is the regional babyface for fat wrestling dorks. With that I think this match was hurt a little by him working heel, you don't book Putski as a heel in Pittsburgh. The opening was great as Jay and Steen cheap shotting each other ruled, and Stevens was a total monster. The NO REMORE CORE beating up Stevens was fine, and the Rock and Rolls hurt partner comes out, is a great match layout. They did have the two on one go way too long, and really

wasn't the beating it needed to be for Mark to risk his health. Jay has to be beaten to death, instead the match was 60/40, doesn't work if your brother defies doctors orders to turn 60/40 into 50/50. Still that was the only flaw as the end section was nuts, and Mark took the kind of sick bumps you need to get this over. Steen was great as a total fucker too, I think I am 180ing on that dude.

RN: Steen's a natural bad guy. He's just a dickhead. So I can't see him as a babyface, since when he was last here as a babyface doing more moves, I recall you hating him, Phil. I pretty much parrot every other thought Phil has on this. As I loved the fired up beginning, was overwhelmingly impressed with Erick fucking Stevens to the point I'm seeking out as much footage of him as possible now, I liked NRC attacking him, I liked the odds being against Jay, but it went on toooo long. Once Marc hit the scene, it was glorious. A true underdog story and he was incredible at just kickstarting a match that prior to him showing up had little heat. He kicked ass, he sold a bit, he made a comeback..and ultimately, he got fuckin destroyed. He was down for a good 6 minutes post match and got a rousing ovation after he was helped to his feet. I can't wait for the rematch. Generico is beloved and I can't see him ever turning to a full blown bad guy. Steen is evil incarnate. He's a ton better than he was in 05. Very much more into lots of talking and yelling in the ring and interacting with fans. He had to have picked that up in PWG in 06.

TKG: Yeah this was an emotional rollercoaster with real traditional match lay out. The opening section with Jay/Stevens vs. Generico/Steen was really great. The powerbomb on the railing was a nasty spot that was reasonable way to get rid of Stevens. The two on one section went long and was built around Generico and Steen using really midgrade offense. The old problem with Steen wasn't that he was flippy as Dean remembers, it was that Steen had a million convoluted death giving legit finishers...and so I'm the last guy who would argue that he needed to be repeatedly springboard pump-handle inverted air raid crash package driving Jay. But really he needed to be dealing out a nastier beating to justify the Mark run in. Mark's run-in section was pretty spectacular although a guy with a concussion taking that much damage and still showing fight kind of makes Stevens look like a pussy for only taking one powerbomb on rail before having to be carried out. Mark's Red Foxx shirt was pretty great and the Briscoe parents and sister really deserve seperate paychecks for their roles as seconds.

DOUG WILLIAMS vs COLT CABANA:

DHR: I had no problem with what was basically a heatless exhibition match since the match before it was so fucking molten. I don't recall anything too memorable in this.

TKG: This wasn't heatless, it was a comedy match with the crowd into all the comedy. Post match Cabana does one of the better wrestler says goodbye speeches as he keeps it light and doesn't get all sappy. Watching the match made me wonder how Cabana's comedy will translate onto the bigger stage. The kind of small club stuff where he mocks opponent's backhair while holding in surfboard may not work with the Vegas acoustics. This show was odd in that had really good card layout which isn't something you expect in ROH or any indy. As this felt like the perfect place for this match right after the emotional rollercoaster of the match before it. Even

the bad Romero match if it had delivered was in the right place on the card. Everything slotted well on first half which leaves you feeling like you're watching a great overall show. I don't want to get into "product" talk here but show flowed together in way that show better than individual matches.

PAS: It was a comedy match, and it was pretty funny. Williams really can't do much besides an exhibition, so Cabana is the perfect guy to that with.

RN: I got a soda during this, so I missed most of it. When I got back I was told by Phil it was pretty damn good, which surprised me, since I'm not a huge Doug Williams fan. But Cabana could work a match with anyone and entertain the crowd, so they busted out funny Euro shit and it worked.

INTERMISSION:

DHR: We go out to the beloved rented Impala and mercilessly browbeat young Rob Naylor for not worshipping at the Regal-Finlay shrine.

RN: Yes, a simply "Eh I don't really like Finlay as much as everyone else" remark was uttered and I paid the price. Aside from that I remember talking about Black Bart, the Hell Brothers, Negro Casas and why I need to watch more of him.

SARA DEL RAY vs ERNIE OSIRIS

DHR: This was AWWWESOME. Osiris wrestles the whole match with a chubby and I SALUTE the selling. There were hideous discussions about Osiris blading versus hardway and white means green and you don't wanna know....

PAS: This really had the feel of someone winning a creepy online auction.

RN: This was just there until I heard someone utter... "Wait, does that guy have a HARD-ON"...then it was like the two old guys on Muppet Show just dropping line after line after the ridiculousness of the whole thing. Ernie really liked that double underhook submission apparently....

TKG: THIS IS AWKWARD!!! THIS IS AWKWARD!!! Sara Del Ray's layered hoop skirt singlet is ridiculous and her ending the match with Chocobal Mukai's finisher only added to the awkwardness.

SHINGO vs MATT CROSS:

DHR: I went to pee! Matt Cross's offense was.... far-fetched.

TKG: I missed the opening section of Cross offense...watched a couple of Shingo shoulderblocks, and punches and went "yikes..No way Cross was going to save this" and spent the rest of the match at the merch table.

PAS: This was terrible. This looked way more like interpretive dance then pro-wrestling. It was especially glaring because this was put right before the Jack Evans match, and Jack does Cross's gymkata shit, but it actually looks like wrestling not rythmic gymnastics. This is the first I saw of SHINGO too, and I though he stunk. One nice lariat (although this isn't the show you should be doing lariats on), but everything else looked like crap. Jesus those fistdrops.

RN: This was probably the worst match on the show. I didn't hate it nearly as much as Phil and put it above any match I saw on Raw last week, but still, it was good guy vs. good guy pretty much and had little heat except for the moves. Cross looked awesome on the Chicago show I picked up on DVD, tons of fire really great offense and he even bloodied up his leg trying to take out Roderick Strong near the rail. But here, he had nothing to really fight for. Shingo did his airplane spin Superstar Graham backbreaker thing, so I dug this match just for that. SHINGO also OBLITERATED a dazed Cross with a lariat that was just a notch between the crazy ones thrown in the main. Not bad, imo, but really no emotion drawn up either.

DAVEY RICHARDS/ RODERICK STRONG vs DELIRIOUS/ JACK EVANS

DHR: Jack Evans was fucking AWESOME in this- selling an absolute ass-beating. The crowd was waaaay into his comebacks and he bumped like a total KING to build up the HEAT~! for the hot tag. Delirious was great on the apron, getting the crowd into Evan's comebacks- distracting the ref to allow Strong and Richards to freely exercise their evil. I truly love a well done Southern Tag and this was the Old School Empire versus the Hardy Boys in 1997.

RN: This match was really great. Fantastic opening...with Delirious and Evans hitting the ring MAD....as they've both been hospitalized by Strong and Davey...so they came out throwing kicks...and Evans..knowing he can't really FIGHT..does the coolest shit ever.... with Strong on the floor, just grabbing the rope, and slingshotting himself into a badass double boots to the fuckin face of Strong. Great move and move effective than any flip plancha he could have done to open the match. Evans later tries a cartwheel to avert an attack on the apron and is PUNTED in the ribs and takes a horrible fall to the floor. This then turns to asskickin time as Strong and Davey invent new ways to punish Jack. Gori Special stretching him out with Roderick hitting a sick loud knifeedge to the ribcage that looked like it hurt a whole fuckin lot. Strong doing his good guys "hey fans, count how long I hold the opponent superplex move" was stopped, as he puts Jack down diverts the ref's attention and punches Jack in the balls. Great stuff. Delirious tags in and cleans house, but he got clobbered with chair and the NRC wins again.

PAS: Both Delirious and Evans are really great at simple face in peril tag wrestling. I also love Evans street fight highflying, Rob is right on on how much better it looks then Evans trying to brawl with punches. I have to give NO REMORE CORE credit, as they were the only heels all night who didn't get face pops. Roderick especially is really great as PROVEN INNOCENT lacrosse date rapist. Davey still looks like he is performing pro-wrestling, rather then pro-wrestling. Still his "look at me I am a heel" stuff is less aggravating then his "look at me I am PURO JUNIOR SUPERSTAR" stuff. Built to some big near falls and I really bought that the underdogs were going to take the win.

TKG: This was a blast as Strong is fun powerhouse dick heel, Richards didn't do anything objectionable and really was playing role of secondary guy more than he does in PWG and both Evans and Delirious can work the face roles well. I think of Delirious as good face in peril but he is fun house of fire with the right partner. I should point out that I recently read where idiots argued that pushing and advertising around Delirious would be a good way to draw more kids to ROH shows. This is the second time I've been to a ROH show in Edison and both times there has been large contingent of kids under 11 in the audience. It was really clear tonight that Delirious shtick doesn't get a big kid pop. Doesn't get the kid pop that Nigel, Cabana, or Evans got. Also we spent an hour lost driving around Edison and the surrounding towns, and I'm convinced that poster the local community with posters of Delirious in order to attract more kids is probably not worth the effort. If they want to increase attendance, they need to poster the local communities with posters advertising Sonjay Dutt v. Gama Singh Jr. Can you repackage Cheeleader Mellissa as a Hindi? Bollywood Aisha? Sara del Ray as Sari Del Ray? I wouldn't want to go too far in that direction. While you might be able to draw an additional 200 people by semi-maining yor Edison shows with Sari Del Raj vs. random Shimmer girl in purda, you risk alienating the ROH base who are turned off by jingoistic angles and might be made uncomfortable by grafting the hair vs. mask stip onto South Asian Hindu/Muslim conflict and the sexual politics around the burka veil.

TAKESHI MORISHIMA vs NIGEL McGUINNESS:

DHR: This was flawed but the lariats were so fucking HIDEOUS that I have to say that I truly adored this match. You have to see Morishima live to realize the degree of fat you are dealing with. It really gets over his power offense when you can SENSE the fat ass behind the lariat into the corner. Too many hulk-ups- especially after the fuckin Superplex- for me to say this was flawless or anything, but I dig a hideous beatdown in the ring and this definately brung that.

PAS: This was right up there with Cena v. Umaga as your 2007 cream of the crop. I have been down on Morishima a bit as I really hated both his KENTA and his Homicide matches. Here though he was in there with another heavyweight so you actually bought him eating offense. I love how McGuinness has simplified his stuff, and his lariat variation were spectacular. They had really established the rebound clothesline as a killer, and I loved how it kept getting cut off, until he finally hit it. I knew that they wouldn't give Nigel the belt yet, but I believed that finish. This had a little bit of NOAHing up, but I kind of mind it less when it is a monster like Morishima, he really should be booked as larger than life, so when he shrugs off something, it mean more when he finally sells.

TKG: Weird. So the deal with Moroshima working juniors is that he works them as though he too were a junior, as though the weight difference doesn't matter. On the other hand when Morishima works heavyweights, its all about the weight- all about Morishima using his bulk to cut off opponents runs of offense. Morishima is really good here at playing up his weight advantage. He whips out all the Mcguire twin 2K7 offense- Butt butt in the corner, standing on prone opponent, bowling himself into seated opponent,etc. They do an absolutely nasty spot where Morishima blocks a powerbomb off the apron by sitting down and crushing McGuinness

across apron. It's a NOAH heavyweight working a main event title match and they build a big climax around an off the apron/ramp spot. The thing that makes those spots work is that you have to have a sense that it's a match changing spot (that there is a huge difference between the nature of the match pre- and post apron/ramp spot). I need to watch this match again on tape because while really climactic, live I was so caught up in the face/heel crowd heat that I can't remember if the big apron/ramp spot really was match changing.

RN: The Morishima BUTT BUTT that countered the Nigel rebound lariat may have been my favorite spot of the entire show. Morishima is really great. I've turned the corner on his ROH stuff, after I was underwhelmed with the Homicide title win, as his tag with Nigel vs. Joe/Homicide was good stuff, his match with Joe was awesome and one of the better matches I've watched all year..and this match with Nigel was better I thought then the Joe match. I was surprised just how over Nigel was. Something about Morishima that is great, is that he isn't flashy at all. So you really don't have ROH fans popping for his flashy moves or any kind of stuff he does like the stuff KENTA or the DG guys do. Sure he does the handspring elbow and top rope dropkick, but he even does those (esp the latter) in an imposing manner. Between those moves, he's as basic as you get. Sit on opponent, sap his energy, stand on opponent, counter a move with a flying butt....etc etc. I think the ONE thing he can do to improve is do more crazy YOKOZUNA style screaming. Yoko was awesome at just yelling shit like "Ush NAAAAY" and people be like "damn, that SUMO guys is crazyyy". Mori has a presence, but I think if he was a bit more over the top, I'd like him even more. The build to the chaotic finish here was tremendous. Morishima blocking Nigel's last chance lariat and dumping him on his head for the win, was the best finish possible. Really good match and I'm liking Morishima's reign more than Danielsons, if only for the fact it is totally different.

Postmatch

DHR: We finally find the Edison Diner and our aging Eastern European waitress seemed to THIS close to a make-out session in the walk-in with TomK. I once again ask Tom how many truckers he would have to blow to make it back to DC if me and Phil ditched him. Tom notes that his prospects aren't good so far up North. I remind him that truckers from all over are driving through the cold, overly-tolled Northeast and it changed the mathematics. I drop Phil and Tom off on Q Street- thanking them profusely for bankrolling me and being such awesome hosts- and head back to Richmond, arriving 9/10ths asleep at 7 in the morning. I fail to make the 11 o'clock service to see my daughters play the bells with the Methodist chime choir but I'll be there for their play about Lazarus so I don't feel too guilty.

PAS: The diner was a legitimate epic journey to find. I felt like Ulysses when we finally get there. Still Edison diner is good enough, that it is worth driving through the chemical plants of NJ to eat at.

DHR: Fuck yeah. It ruled. And you guys rule.

~#~

NOAH 4/14/07

[PHIL SCHNEIDER/TOM K]

Yoshinobu Kanemaru/Masao Inoue/Yuuto Aijima vs Kentaro Shiga/Kishin Kawabata/Masashi Aoyagi:

TKG: So absolutely stoked to see Aoyagi back in NOAH. I mean they're running Misawa v Sano for title, I want to see Misawa vs all the great juniors of the nineties. But they don't have Aoyagi come in and just waste his opponents on the way to a title challenge. They have Aoyagi eat the pin which seems like a real waste. You watch this match and get the sense that Aoyagi/Kawabata would be a pretty great team and its a shame Shiga isn't out injured again. Aijima apparently feels the same way as he tries to concuss Shiga with a botched powerslam. Whose idea was it to bring in Aijima? Of all the guys in Kings Road, NOAH decides to bring in the worst one? The Inoue v Kawabata or Aoyagi sections were choice. Kawabata and Aoyagi can carry a Kanemaru. But yikes did Aijima and Shiga drag this thing into the dirt. Is Shiga doing a Petey Williams/ BJ Whitmer tribute gimmick where he has to play with his hair before and after every move? He wisely ditches the gimmick post concussion as he doesn't want to touch his head.

PAS: Post concussion Shiga was really funny as he was clearly trying to avoid taking any bumps on his neck, but kept himself in the ring to run through his shtick. Aoyagi did look really great although someone really blew the jumping DDT that Kanemaru tried on him. It looked like it was probably Aoyagi, but I am going ahead and blaming Kanemaru.

IZU/Makoto Hashi vs Yoshinari Ogawa/Shuhei Taniguchi:

TKG: So I was pretty excited when I saw this on paper. IZU/Hashi are a fun team and I like Ogawa and rookie role is pretty defined role most of the time and I watch NOAH because I love this type of heatless undercard tag matchups. But this went too long and Taniguchi wasn't really working the normally well defined role. Normally you expect your guy in rookie role to be eating a lot more and learning to sell. It felt like he was being protected in a way you normally don't protect your young guys in Japan. Here he works almost even in battle of the powerhouse sections opposite IZU. And throws a ton of suplexes, just one after another. Someone needs to take Taz-iguchi aside and explain "This is the second opening match on the show, enough with the suplex variations." I mean he is a lot taller than Taz, which is probably the reason he's being protected but still.

PAS: This also didn't have nearly enough Ogawa, as Taniguchi was clearly working face, and Ogawa can't do much as a tag partner of a pushed face. Taniguchi's throwing of suplexes was fine, but he looked really bad eating anything, and his punches and kicks sucked. The Taz comparison really works on all levels other then height, also I don't speak Japanese so I don't know if his mikework is long and ponderous.

Mohammed Yone/Akira Taue vs Joe E. Legend/Ted DiBiase Jr.:

TKG: Yikes. Did Bobby Duncum Jr. die as a result of drug overdose or suicide? Either way, I'm reminded it really was a tragic waste. For guys working a gimmick of a Gaijin tag team with some signature comedy, Legend and DiBiase Jr. really come across as poor man's Modest/Morgan. The sections with Taue as geriatric man molesting a young Christian Missionary were amusing. But when the Gaijin team is on offense, you don't want to watch this. Way too much time was spent with the Gaijin on offense.

PAS: I really liked Yone countering the chinlock by smothering DiBiase with his afro, outside of that, oof. I read some idiot claim that Joe E. Legend would have made a good territorial main eventer, so we amused ourselves thinking of shittier territorial main eventers. We came up with Al Tomko and Lars Anderson, but got into an argument about Bulldog Brower.

Daniel Cross vs Takeshi Rikio:

TKG: This was a fine lil three minute heavyweight slugfest. Rikioh dominates early with strikes, Cross comes back with big throws, Rikioh responds with big throws of his own and it's over.

PAS: This really felt like an iMPACT match, as it was super short but instead of being a squash it had both guys getting in all of their stuff. This was better then 95% of the iMPACT matches, but they still could have shaved a minute or two off of the Joe E. Legend match and given this eight.

Bison Smith/Bryan Danielson/Ricky Marvin vs Akitoshi Saito/KENTA/Atsushi Aoki:

PAS: This was really a story of two matches, as the first part of the match was actively bad, with Aoki and Danielson blowing some stuff, KENTA sleep walking through his sections, and Bison Smith Bison Smithing it up. They do have a really great last six minutes as Aoki and Dragon isolate in the ring and have a great little mini match, with Aoki having really nice roll ups and dropkicks, and Dragon hitting all of his big spots really well. Aoki has an especially great eat of the back superplex.

TKG: Phil really covered the Danielson Aoki match ups, and well I'd rather see Saito exchanging shoulderblocks with Daniel Cross. And yeah KENTA really felt did like he was sleepwalking through everything. His stuff matched up with Marvin worked as Marvin does a fun "I have too much speed for you" section in the first half and then does a "you can't just run through your signature stuff, I have watched your matches" part in the second. He also does a pretty fantastic punch counterpunch exchange on the floor section with KENTA that you can make out through corner of the screen during the Danielson/Aoki finish.

Naomichi Marufuji/Naoki Sano vs Mitsuhara Misawa/Kontaro Suzuki:

TKG: I really dug all the Sano vs Misawa sections and am really looking forward to their title match. Sano is a guy who will waste his opponent with savate kicks to the belly while Misawa is a guy who will waste opponent with elbow strikes. Pretty simple story. At one point the two kind of do an old man Red vs Low Ki section where they are able to dodge opponent's offense- but instead of it being a display of speed, it's all about knowledge of the limits of opponents

moveset. On paper, it doesn't come across as cool as it did in ring. The problem with this match is that a match like this really needs to establish a pecking order. And this really never did that. It's true that Marafuji held the title recently, but Suzuki hasn't and the whole match felt really like everyone was even. I liked the Suzuki vs Marafuji sections a lot more than the Marafuji vs Shiosaki sections. But they felt really pointless. Everything was solid, but outside of the Sano vs Misawa sections everything felt meaningless.

PAS: Sano vs Misawa and Sano beating on Suzuki were really important feeling, everything with Marifuji was kind of crap. Sano is really playing his role well, he doesn't do a lot (although he has a nice tope); it is almost all spin kicks and double stomps. Still everything thing he does is brutal looking, and Misawa sells each spin kick like he lacerated his liver. I like the continuity between this and the trios match on the other show. As Sano wasted Misawa with the spin kick to the face in the other match, but here Misawa is able to avoid it. They have done a nice job setting that up as a killer move for their title match. This match did have the one thing that has begun to irritate about these NOAH matches: seems like the guy getting pinned needs to get one two count on an insane move before going down. Aoki gets his shoulder up after a backdrop superplex, Kanemaru gets his shoulder up from a nasty Aoyagi piledriver, here Suzuki gets his shoulder up after a springboard spiked piledriver. Just end the match on the big move, your meaningless undercard matches don't need dramatic two counts, save that for your main events.

Yoshihiro Takayama/Takashi Sugiura vs Jun Akiyama/Go Shiosaki:

TKG: This was the best match on the show and really laid out well. Does a great job putting over the Takayama/Sugiura team. Really everyone looked good in this. It never had really meaningless Shiosaki vs. Sugiura section as this was instead all about Sugiura being completely ready for Akiyama and the team of Sugiura and Takayama having nasty double teams. Everything Takayama did felt like it could be a legit finisher. His German on Shiosaki was a HOLY SHIT German. Sugiura gets Akiyama in a fireman's carry and drops him onto an incoming body destroying Takayama knee. Still this was kind of worked like a throwaway houseshow match. Not even a houseshow in an important market.

PAS: I think I liked this a little more than Tom, as it started as a real houseshow match, but the destroying of Akiyama and Sugiara getting the pin on him, ended up feeling really important. Akiyama doesn't even get the two count that everyone else is getting before getting pinned. He just kind of gets crushed. So after this match, you really feel like Akiyama and Rikio are in big trouble.

~!~

ASSORTED BIG JAPAN PRO WRESTLING
[DEAN RASMUSSEN]

I've been downloading everything off the internet and burning it onto dvds and watching it in my bedroom when the kids decide to settle in for some good old-fashioned all-American annoying

children's cartoons. If I ever find the motherfucker who does the voices for Jimmy Neutron, I'm gonna break my fucking leg up his ass. Anyway, I've been watching waaaaay too much Dragon Gate and DDT and I'm enjoying it more than I figured I would but I also can't quite bring myself to review it just yet. So I'll just download the Big Japan from Lenny and Ryan and not think about the smooth-skinned thin boys of Dragon Gate and concentrate on the hideous bloodsucking freaks of Big Japan. Plus Mammoth Sasaki can disappoint me again and we- the reader and the reviewer- can in embrace in a comforting cyberhug of longing and despair.

(Please note that I watched the Sasaki-Miyamoto MATCH OF THE YEAR CANDIDATE~! and thought- yeah, sure it was fun, but Sasaki kicks out of a fucking moonsault from a scaffold? Suck my ass.)

3/14/2007

Hakaru Imai/Tomomitsu Matsunaga vs Muneki Sawa/Isami: I love this, possibly the worst collection of hairstyles ever assembled in a wrestling ring. I can't figure out if Sawa's meticulous bedhead is more stupid looking than Hakaru Imai's back half of head mohawk. When they lock up at the bell, I can't really pay attention to the matwork. Imai's hair is definately the worst hairstyle since Yoshie rocked the starfish on his skull. And really- you have to be a big fat guy like Yoshie to get away with ruining your dome like that. I dig Imai's forearms though. Isami leans into them like a man also. Sawa and Matsunaga beat on each other and it's fun leading up to rookie backdrops and suplexes. Sawa does perfectly fine 4th rate Hoshikawa impression and this was a good little rookie match. Stiff is better then flourescent bulbs. Yes, it is.

Daikokubo Benkei/Yuichi Taniguchi vs Miracle Man/Kuishinbo Kamen: Miracle Man? Are we sure he isn't Battle Ranger? Close enough for me to have to go for him. Actually, I think I read that Miracle Man is Battle Ranger. Benkei and Tanaguchi make me wonder whatever happened to all those guys who wrestled in all those Onita Pro main events. Benkei has lost weight. Oh, and that's not the Taniguchi I was thinking of. WAIT! That's VIKING TANIGUCHI! I am torn. Pseudo-Battle Ranger or Viking Taniguchi? Taniguchi is a lot less fat than last time I saw him so I will go with hoping Nise Battle Ranger wins. Kamen and Viking do some retarded comedy spots and I await the blazing white hot hate of Benkei versus Miracle Man! Battle Ranger pokes the elderly Benkei in the butt and- at Benkei's age, he's already having enough nightmares about men sticking their fingers up his ass- so I would label that move as "cruel". Kamen smacks Benkei in the back of the head and you would assume that this is all leading up to Benkei beating the living dogshit out of the two tiny comedy wrestlers. Instead he drives his ass into their faces in the corner. And I think I've pretty used up all my will to live after having to think about Benkei's ass this much. Viking Taniguchi lost weight but didn't get new ring gear so he having to adjust his singlet because his nipple keeps poking out. This match isn't nearly as disturbing as I'm making it out to be. And maybe THAT'S THE INSIDIOUS TRUTH ABOUT THIS MATCH! They poke Viking in his ass and all comic relief of the ensuing comedy spots are a barren field, salted and limed and the comedy will find no purchase as I will never recover from the psychological beating of this match. Benkei lands on Miracle Man and our great national nightmare is finally over. GOD DAMN YOU TO HELL, BIG JAPAN COMEDY MATCH.

3/4/2007

Mammoth Sasaki/HiroYuki Kondo vs Tetsuhiro Kuroda/Tomomitsu Matsunaga: Oh Mammoth Mammoth, your slump is breaking my heart. Hey, Matsunaga from the bad hair match! I should know this Kondo from somewhere, I'm sure. Kuroda does a weak running clothesline. TWICE! Mammoth comes in and chops Matsunaga and bodyslams him and so far so good. Mammoth hits two motherfucking FIERCE lariats into the corner. Mammoth procures and makes a chinlock look hurty. And he tags out. Kondo has a lowgrade Kamikaze's 1998 offence and that's more than I can ask for. Mammoth tags in and forearm and then fucking KILLS Matsunaga with a TRULY DICKISH powerbomb- i mean just fuckin DESTROYS him. Okay, Mammoth is back. Matsunaga dropkicks to tag Kuroda- who is 100% 2006 Lex Luger now in his lumpy uselessness. Mammoth bumps big for his shitty offense before killing Kuroda with a powerslam. Mammoth sells for Matsunaga's forearms before bringing the big boot. And he tags out. Kondo sells all weird- like he is a robot or something. Maybe he was a Bio-Franken at one time. But yeah, offense of 1998 Kamikaze and selling like Bio-Franken is about all I can ask of my sleazy indie wrestler. Here's to you, young Kondo. Kuroda Shining Wizards Mammoth and Mammoth opts not to sell it- or possibly had to get into position for Kuroda's crappy lariat. Mammoth eats a German like a fuckin CHAMP and then eats a Matsunaga German like a CHAMP. Mammoth tries to start killing Matsunaga with lariats but Matsunaga hits a bunch of roll-ups. Eventually, Mammoth hits two truly hellish lariats and just fuckin motherfucking fucking KILLS Matsunaga with a Brainbuster for the pin. Ah Mammoth. I'm glad the slump is over....

Mixed Barbed Wire Board Tag Match: MEN's Teioh/Kyoko Kimura vs ONRYO/KAORU: Oh hell yeah, KAORU is fuckin hot. Take it from me. I'm old and know hot. Kimura and Men's are sporting afros. KAORU is sporting leather pants and they are splurtacular. And there is ONRYO- all dusty and sans Shinnigami. KAORU and Kimura collar and elbow to tease going into the barbed-wire boards and KAORU is still pretty limber for entering Sherrie Martel older dream girl territory. And she will go backless and back first into the barbed-wire. KAORU will also bump like fucking KAORU when you throw her into the chairs. They kinda go into a straight tag match which isn't so good since Men's Teioh and ONRYO haven't had anything in the tank since the turn of the millenium. So yeah, I watched this and definately STILL remember MEN'S TEIOH vs Tiger Mask 4 from Michinoku Pro and I STILL remember KAORU vs Akira Hokuto from GAEA. Barbed-Wire Board sandwich with KAORU Twisting Senton was a fun finisher but they kinda keep going after that. KAORU with a roll-up and I was hoping to see an Excaliber after all these years. Oh well. This really felt like a Tom Brandy versus Vladimir Koloff wash-up indie mail-in but with KAORU making a few parts cool.

3/25/2007

Daisuke Sekimoto/Katsumasa Inoue vs Mammoth Sasaki/Tetsuhiro Kuroda: Ah Mammoth, can we make it two in a row? I'm sure I should know Katsumasa Inoue from somewhere. He is bulky. Sekimoto is froglike. Kuroda really sucks it at this point. He definitely protects those tender biceps when lariating. He does actually sell a Dragon Screw and Figure Four pretty well so here's to that. Inoue works the leg and Kuroda finds his calling- not throwing shitty lariats.

Inoue's offense is pretty comical and Sekimoto is clueless and doesn't work the leg but the crowd is behind Kuroda's comeback anyway. Mammoth is Mammoth in the gnarley hatefulness of his house a-fire offense. They crush Inoue's testicles with chairs. Mammoth drops a few legdrops on Inoue's testicles. I assume this is to show Diasuke that you can- you know- work a body part. Though they be tiny and now inflamed. Kuroda hits a Buzzkiller since Inoue has no breath left- whay with his nuts being smashed and whatnot. Inoue dropkicks to comeback and Mammoth bumps big for the fired up Sekimoto. Kuroda takes an assbeating well and I dig him as the victim of his tagteam- and Mammoth is my favorite Robert Gibson. Mammoth powerslams to transition and Kuroda shines the wizard and gingerly lariats for two. Sekimoto powerbombs for two and they do delayed diving headbutts until Mammoth makes the save. Mammoth and Sekimoto hulk up and they trade finishers for a minute until Sekimoto tags to allow Inoue to get killed by Kuroda and Mammoth. Inoue gets in some Tiger Suplexes before Mammoth mauls him a lariat and then Kuroda busts a chair over head and Dragon Suplexes him. Mammoth totally fuckin slaughterizes him with a lariat but Sekimoto makes the save and then Mammoth fuckin TOTALLY motherfucking fucking annihilates him with a Brainbuster for the win. This had to be the best Kuroda has looked since FMW 1997. MAMMOTH FUCKING RULES.

Double Ring Four Way Tag Death Match: Takashi Sasaki/Yuko Miyamoto vs Jun Kasai/Jaki Numazawa vs Ryuji Ito/ Isami vs Shadow WX/W*inger: Shadow WX is sooo obviously working in an office during the day. The hair, the weight loss, the look on his face that the giant scar tissue from this match could fuck up that big presentation Thursday. Good on him. This match kinda kept going. Abby Junior bled more than the match called for, which is a weakness of his. He should save the five alarm bladejobs for five alarm matches, not jaunty little throwaway romps like this. Jun Kasai hits a nice falling headbutt from the top on W*inger. Folks get slammed against walls. W*inger threatens to Senton off the balcony but Ryuji Ito knocks him out of the way and proceeds to crush Takeshi Sasaki through a table. So yeah, it's a fun little match. I just noticed that there are two rings? It's very confusing because it seems like they edited two matches together, which they are kinda doing. And yeah this kinda goes on for a while as they do farfetched spots with a latter in one ring and have a pretty much straight tag match in the other. Straight tag match was actually pretty fun and they all migrate over and do a bunch of other goofy spots. Abby mauls Isami and we call it a perfectly fine match. Well, an overly long match with some pretty crappy sections but I was raring to hate this so I count my blessings one by one.

4/8/2007

Takashi Sasaki/Ryuji Ito/Yuko Miyamoto vs Jun Kasai/Jaki Numazawa/Isami: I figured sullen and melancholy Lenny had typed it all wrong, but it does appear that Big Japan ran the same deathmatch two days in a row in two different buildings with cameras rolling at both. Maybe I should compare and contrast. We'll see. This one looks like it is being held at a dorm multi-purpose room. Imagine what how surprised the Theta Death Rho step team were when they showed up at the wrong conference room. So yeah, this is pretty great in its Jesus This is Fucking Sleazy- Even For Fuckin Big Japan-ness. It's actually a long room and they can use these carts to hit each other. And there is a balcony on one end. What a weird fucking room.

Isami dives off the balcony and nobody actually sells it- which would annoy me if I wasn't still trying to figure out the Eischer logic of the dimensions of the room. Plus he is about 94 pounds so it isn't like an Aja Kong tope, I guess. And really, none of these guys are going to make you forget Honma-Yamakawa 99 or anything. They do work it like a straight tag match after a while- a tag match enhanced with lots of broken fluorescent bulbs shards. God, Ryuji Ito should audition for the next Sundance Channel Meth Amphetamine docudrama. Well, actually, I guess you could get a group rate if all 6 of these guys have the same agent. I assume Miyamoto is in this promotion initially because his back turns to raw liver 45 seconds into any deathmatch he is in- and then they came to the realization that he is a perfectly fine little wrestler. Numazawa is getting fat and thus getting him closer to being my favorite repulsive deathmatch fighter- now that the bloom is off the Mammoth Sasaki rose (OOPS! Reveiwed out of order! SUCK MY MAMMOTH LOVING ASS, NUMAZAWA~!). Isami has the spot of the match with the doubleknees through the fluorescent bulbs to the chest off the toprope. But it makes me wonder how much cooler it would look if it were barbed-wire. Call me old school. Sasaki suplexes Isami a bunch and gets the pin. It was quite servicable but needed a.] barbed wire and b.] fire and c.] a sense of deathmatch urgency and WILL. I feel the urge to use the word PERFUNCTORY. There. It was really perfunctory. A perfunctory deathmatch seems like a oxymoron but here you go. Building was neat.

4/9/2007

Takashi Sasaki/Ryuji Ito/Yuko Miyamoto vs Jun Kasai/Jaki Numazawa/isami: So they really don't capitalize isami. So his gimmick is that he is a disciple of ee cummins or is his gimmick that he's a teenage girl? Well, you can't tell me that he isn't cute- though I'm sure the scar tissue of the next two years will put a real dent in his poon quota. Anyway, normaller building- same lame fluorescent bulbs. God, I miss a spiderweb. How about something that explodes? Was FMW the true PINNACLE of garbage matches? I guess so. Miyamoto and Kasai battle into the bulbs and Ito and Numazawa trade what had to be the most pungent shoulder blocks in Japanese wrestling history. isami does a tope. He doesn't weigh anymore than he weighed the night before, so I would actually be pissed off at this match if anybody sold his tope. And the match- of course- doesn't piss me off in that regard. Miyamoto's double knee thrust through the bulbs into the corner looked really cool. Sasaki kicks the hell out of isami and we get to RALLY behind his fighting spirit. Ryuji Ito does a moonsault for two and they are beating the crap out of isami, THUS this is a far more coherent match than the match from the day before. Kasai makes the hot tag and brainbusts Miyamoto through fluorescent bulbs and they fight in the corner and Kasai no-sells a toprope hurricanrana, rendering this match useless to me. But hell, if you get a two count on a powerbomb off scaffolding, I guess you would assume that a toprope hurricanrana would have no affect on you. I did have an affect on me. It made me fuckin hate this match. YEA! It keeps going but I no longer give a shit. What a mess.

~@~

ASSORTED PRO WRESTLING GUERRILLA
[PHIL SCHNEIDER]

So PWG is a promotion I have heard some stuff about, but haven't watched a ton of, at least recently. I thought Super Dragon vs Necro Butcher was the best indy match I saw last year, so I was able to get my hands on a bunch of stuff and thought I would review it for the DVDVR.

Super Dragon/Davey Richards vs Human Tornado/El Generico- 10/1/05: Two charismatic babyfaces who can take huge beatings and giant bumps really should be the perfect opponents for this team. This was a fun match in a vacuum but for some reason had a completely dead crowd. Nothing anyone did got any kind of reaction, and it really killed what they were trying to do. This is the first long Tornado match I have seen, and he is pretty fun, he takes stuff awkwardly in a way that makes it really look nasty, and the beating he takes at the end from Dragon is off the charts. His tope con hilo straight to the floor is fucking lunatic. Generico looked really indie-ish in parts, but he also is really great at taking an asskicking. Both guys also had really had good comebacks. Richards starts his record of doing very little for me here- as for a guy working heel, he seems to spend a lot of time gesturing to the crowd to get him hyped up.

Super Dragon/Davey Richards vs Petey Williams/Chris Sabin- 10/14/05: I didn't hate this nearly as much as I thought I would considering this goes 40+ minutes and only has one guy I don't hate. Dragon was a superstar here, he comes off as such a punk that you actually buy a Chris Sabin face in peril section. Petey Williams is of course epicly bad, his ring apron work is some of the worst I have seen and his hot tag chops and botched rans are embarrassing. Also Davey Richards vs Petey Williams sections are as bad as one might expect Davey Richards vs Petey Williams sections to be. This was the match that I noticed that Davey Richards appears unable to either throw or eat a snap mare, something that continued in the next match. I guess Fire Pro Wrestling doesn't have snapmares. I did like how the whole match was built around the Canadian Destroyer and never delivered it.

Super Dragon/Davey Richards vs Ronin/B-Boy- 11/18/05: This started out really fun, as Super Dragon just beats the shit out of a fat kid in a goofy red outfit. Dragon is really great as Ian Rotten beating on Simon Sezz and Ronin is fine as a semi-trained guy having chairs thrown at his head. B-Boy and Dragon have history and they do a nice job keeping them separate for the first part of the match. Of course, keeping them apart does mean we are stuck watching Richards and B-Boy do indy stiffness exchanges, but they build anticipation. I also liked how during the face in peril section, Ronin reverses the "Super Dragon stands in his opponents corner and gets a tag spot." It is a great spot, but I like the PWG native guy knowing it well enough to counter it. Then this match goes straight to hell. They do 15 minutes of please don't stop, 2.9 finish wrestling, where Ronin is miraculously working 50/50 with guys that were treating him like a joke the whole match. Ronin really shouldn't be doing exchanges, and B-Boy and Davey Richards 2.9 wrestling is as bad as it gets. There are also some Ronin vs Richards sections which look completely backyardish, at one point Ronin throws a forearm, and Richards turns around and runs to the ropes, and steps through them to bump to the floor. By the end this is a total shit fest and really killed me in the way Petey Williams didn't.

Delirious/Quicksilver/Colt Cabana/M Dogg 20 vs Necro Butcher/Chris Hero/Claudio Castagnoli/Rocky Romero 9/8/06:

Recently at the Laugh Factory, Dane Cook broke Richard Pryor's two hour and forty minute set record by performing for three hours. Then a week later, Dave Chapelle crushed that record by doing almost six hours. This was a forty minute comedy match, that was only occasionally Dave Chapelle, was mostly Dane Cook and only one Necro punch approached Richard Pryor.

MCMG vs DIFH 11/17/06: This is probably your most pimped PWG match of 2006, but did very little for me. Alex Shelly and Jimmy Jacobs both looked really good, but they have a million matches against each other which were much better. They tried to work a basic tag formula at the beginning, but the MCMG were theoretically working heel but playing to the crowd, and DIFH were theoretically working face but kept having their manager interfere. Shelly had a bunch of cool shit, but honestly he had about five or six too many cool moves, three nifty things is good, ten is overkill. Sabin really stinks, some of the double teams were nice, but his solo exchanges were stinky. There is one roaring elbow in your big finish that was totally awful looking, he does a dainty little spin, and then kind of pokes his elbow out like a straight arm in football. The finish was your standard indy big moves tag finish, which never really got as good as a Briscoes style indy big moves tag finish. Whole thing left me kind of flat.

Scorpio Sky vs Homicide 11/18/06: This in many ways was this was the most satisfying of all the PWG matches. Sky is working a black comic book nerd who thinks he is G-Unit gimmick, complete with Jade Chung dressed like Melissa Ford. Homicide calls him a Myspace Gangster and kicks his ass all over the ring, with Sky only getting the advantage when Chung interferes. Homicide is a really great sleazy Dusty, as everytime Chung grabs him, he tries to feel on her pussy. Finally he goes to give her the cop killer, and Sky wins with a roll up. Classic formula match, really done well.

PAC The Man Gravity Forgot vs El Generico 11/18/06: This was one of the more hyped matches from 2006 and really kind of delivered everything you would want out of a PAC The Man Gravity Forgot vs El Generico match. PAC The Man Gravity Forgot is a guy who is pretty bland, but can do some ridiculously intricate things and gets a bunch of height on his highspots. Generico is really great at eating crazy flying offense and there are two or three moments of rana and headscissors reversals which were pretty breathtaking. They built to the big spots nicely and they were certainly big enough, the top rope reverse rana and the brainbuster on the turnbuckle were both insane, and the eating of the moves was as impressive as the application. PAC The Man Gravity Forgot especially took the brainbuster like death. It wasn't a match with much else than crazy spots, but for a match with crazy spots, they were crazy.

~@~

Phil's Ongoing 2007 MOTY List

1. John Cena vs Umaga WWE 1/28
2. Solar 1/Mano Negra vs Negro Navarro/Black Terry Lucha Libre VIP 3/10
3. MNM vs Hardy Boyz WWE 1/28
4. Briscoes vs Ricky Marvin/Kontaro Suzuki NOAH 1/21

5. Takeshi Sasaki vs Yuki Miyamoto BJW 3/14
6. John Cena vs Shawn Michaels WWE 4/1
7. Shinjiro Ohtani/Takao Omori/Kazunari Murakami vs Kohei Sato/Hiroataka Yokoi/Yoshiro Takayama Zero 1 1/19
8. Yuji Nagata vs Hiroshi Tanahashi NJ 4/13
9. Undertaker vs Batista WWE 4/1
10. BJ Whitmer vs Jimmy Jacobs ROH 1/27
11. Takeshi Morishima/Mohammed Yone vs Jun Akiyama/Takeshi Rikio NOAH 4/1
12. Necro Butcher vs Toby Klien CZW 1/13
13. Chris Benoit vs Chavo Guerrero WWE 1/16

2. Solar 1/Mano Negra vs Negro Navarro/Black Terry- Lucha Libre VIP- 3/10: God bless the internet, because in previous years, all of these spot show matches with old fat luchadores ruling it on the mat were lost forever. Now they are starting to seep out and end up on the computer where I can watch them. This isn't as great as last years "let's show these punks how lucha libre is supposed to be" match (Villanos/Negro Navarro v. Heavy Metal/Dos Caras Jr./Solar) but was still pretty brilliant. The match starts out matching Solar and Navarro, and we know what those two bring to the table, suprisingly their first caida matwork is out shined by Black Terry and Mano Negra ruling it.

I knew all of the other guys could still go, but I had no idea Mano Negra still could work at this level, he had this awesome poofy hair that made him look like the corporate villain in an 80's sex comedy ("This is the only mountain that will let us snowboard, and they want to shut it down!"), and he and Terry do some awesome leverage standing stuff, and some great matwork counters. The second caidia mixes up the pairings and again both matchups are great. Black Terry is amazing, he is 54 years old, but in great shape and moves and bumps like he is 30 years younger. I think you could throw a mask on him and stick him Guerreros Del Inferno and people would think he was some hot shot young indy guy CMLL repackaged. The third fall, they match Navarro and Solar up again and they do a fast roll up section which was incredible, slick, quick and amazing. I also liked how they ran a draw finish with two double eliminations, rather than a time limit or a double DQ. At one point Coloso Colesetti on commentary yells out "They wanted the lucha, here is the lucha." Can't say it any better then that.

5. Takeshi Sasaki vs Yuki Miyamoto- BJW- 3/14: Boy, Ultimo Dragon is really some kind of twisted genius. Listen to the girls scream for Miyamoto and you realize that even deathmatch promotions are relying on blow-job wrestlers. Of course in deathmatch promotions pretty doesn't stay pretty. Look at Sasaki- he was a good looking guy at one point and now he has scars all over his face and is starting to get that death match belly. Miyamoto is a guy I haven't seen much of before, but he was pretty great here. He is amazing underdog babyface, spunky underdog is a pretty standard role in Japanese wrestling, but Miyamoto does it as well as anyone I have seen in a while.

A lot of the Big Japan matches tend to get into overkill, where you are watching for nothing but crazy shit and not the match. Miyamoto really kept the match together, you got the sense this was his big shot and he was going to die on his shield. This really made me buy kickouts that would normally take me out of a match. The crazy move through the scaffold, should normally

end a match, but since Miyamoto never did anything but bleed after it, it didn't kill me. There also was pretty good selling throughout although there was a couple time where a guy would go back on offense a little too quick. Also the double stomp off the scaffold felt like a throw away move, and took some steam away from the big spots off the scaffold at the end. Still the best Japanese death match I have seen in quite a while, and I want to see way more of Miyamoto.

6. John Cena vs Shawn Michaels- WWE- 4/1: This was really the match that ends all arguments about John Cena. Shawn Micheals is personally the most loathsome thing in wrestling. I have such a visceral hatred of him, the fact I enjoyed this match as much as I did was pretty much a miracle, and it was all Cena.

Micheals comes out in this preposterous Christian stripper outfit with goofy crosses hanging down and mingling with his chest hair, he looks like a Ted Haggard rent boy post Protease. Then while Cena is coming to the ring, he is making faces like a drag queen doing Cher. He is like Paul Lynde at this point, I have no idea how anyone can take him seriously. The first part of the match is all about crafty Micheals outsmarting Cena. Micheals is pretty terrible in this part, ducking punches like he is bowing to a Japanese lady, throwing wrestling school trainee level chops and mincing around the ring like a less masculine May Flowers. Cena was great though, showing frustration through his face, struggling against poorly executed holds, and bumping big for whatever those punch like things were supposed to be. At one point Micheals had Cena in a loose headscissors, and Cena must have held his breath because his face is turning purple. Micheals does hit a nice Asai, although even the coolest thing about that was how Cena catches it against the table so it looked like his back was broken.

The next section was Micheals working the leg and he basically used stomps and chop blocks which he can pull off. People are bitching about the leg selling, but I thought it was fine, Cena sold it a ton when it was being applied, and also sold it during the first part of his comeback, until he was able to shrug it off. He didn't just stop selling, there was a transition. Somewhere in this Micheals takes a shitty looking posting and blades, but still basically controls. The piledriver on the steps was pretty great looking, although I don't get why Ross kept calling it a spike piledriver. Who was the spiker? I guess Jesus is his Arn.

Your normal Micheals formula match has the opponent control the match, destroy Shawn's surgically repaired back, hit all of his finishers, Micheals then Resurrects, hits his superkick and pins his opponent. It is a match structure that makes his opponents look like shit. Here he controlled the match, while he doesn't really have enough stuff to control a match, at least he doesn't make all of Cena's stuff look like shit by ignoring it.

The finish run was a lot better then in the other title match, you had the kick outs of the finishers, but they weren't just running through their finishers for two counts, they were mixing it up. I loved the constant drop toe holds by Cena, they looked great and it is a very cool set up for the STF. Cena's fatigue selling was awesome, and I liked them laying on each other at the end, although Micheals rubbing Cena's cock was pretty fucking uncomfortable, I guess jerking Cena off was a match strategy "Hunter is always spent after I do this."

Pretty amazing one man show, it seems pretty crazy to say, but Cena may be the best wrestler in the world right now. No one around works big time main event wrestling better. He may not do as many cool things as say Austin Aries, but everything he does counts.

8. Yuji Nagata vs Hiroshi Tanahashi- NJ- 4/13: This is a match where coming in I didn't like either guy. I am not sure going out I like either guy much more, but this was a pretty good match nonetheless. I really liked all of the legwork, the dragon screw over the top rope to the floor is a very cool looking big move, and I dug all of the different dragon screw variations Tanahashi had. Nagata also did a good job of selling here, and he kept a lid on the over the top facial expressions which always take me out of Nagata matches. Still- outside of the legwork- Tanahashi has some of the shittiest looking offense in wrestling. There is a point where he does a very cool legsweep counter to a Nagata high kick, and follows it up with an elbowdrop and senton combination that was so dainty it would make 2002 M Dugg 20 scoff. His big run of suplexes at the end of the match looked Momoe Nakanishi level bad, and I have no idea what the fuck the Slingblade is supposed to be. So this match was really hurt by the dramatic nearfalls all coming off such crappy looking stuff. Still Nagata looked as good as I have seen him in years and it was a dramatic exciting main event match.

9. Undertaker vs Batista- WWE- 4/1: The disappointing Batista vs JBL matches always started with great big man slugfests, but they would be main eventing and have to go 20+ so you would have long chinlock sections. This wasn't a main event, so they could work a brawl the whole match. I really liked most of this match, big guys going after each other, and some big moves sprinkled in. The tope was awesome looking, and pretty crazy to do with only one guy catching. The match fell apart a little at the end though, as they really did this obligatory WWE main event finish. A guy hits his secondary finisher for a dramatic two count, then the other guy hits his secondary finisher for a dramatic two count, rinse repeat. It is pretty cliched and it really looked tacked on here. Still this was damn fun for a match nobody expected anything from.

10. BJ Whitmer vs Jimmy Jacobs- ROH- 1/27: I think there is an argument to be made, that, for basically the same guy, current Jimmy Jacobs is better than Eddie Gilbert ever was. Tiny guy with great wrestling mind who was best in crazy brawls. The entire Jimmy loves Lacey angle was truly brilliant, I can't think of a better angle in the last ten years, and it was pretty much all Jacobs. This was part of that saga, as Jacobs tries to get revenge on Whitmer who he blames for disfiguring his love, turning him from Emo to Screamo. Even without the backstory this was a great brawl. Building from chairshots and spikings to insane spears into guardrails and Jacobs flying headfirst into chairs. Both guys spray blood out of their heads, and land wrong on their necks. Weirdest thing about the match is BJ Whitmer doesn't actually do anything that bothers me. Even the BJ Whitmer matches I have liked, there are moments where I go "Fuck this guy." Here he was completely inoffensive and bled and bumped enough not to drag down the Jacobs show. The ending was pretty ass, as that fake Benoit guy from Smackdown with a muscle queen back tattoo comes in and Explodes Whitmer through a table. I forgive it, because this wasn't the end of a feud so you need a reason for these two to keep killing each other, but it dropped the match below your other high end 2007 garbage.

11. Takeshi Morishima/Mohammed Yone vs Jun Akiyama/Takeshi Rikio: This didn't have the deep story that your real high end NOAH tags have, but for big guys pounding on each other it was pretty class. They really did a lot of matching up, with Yone and Akiyama really pairing off, and the double Takeshis really going after each other. I always enjoy fat guys slapping each

other and these were a pair of fat guys throwing slaps. Yone and Akiyama came off their awesome 4 minute match on the last big NOAH show by going after each other here. There were a couple of off parts, the big running spot in the crowd took to long to set up and didn't come off good, and there was a section where Rikio and Yone were brawling on the floor where both guys looked completely lost. Your big run was pretty great with the highlight being Rikio countering the doomsday device spinkick by crushing Morishima with a short arm lariat.

12. Necro Butcher vs Toby Klien- CZW- 1/13: This is one of those match ups in wrestling, much like Santo vs Blue Panther, Steamboat vs Flair, Ishikawa vs Ikeda, which is consistently great every time it happens. This is one of the lesser works in their oeuvre. You have the real CZW booking, where CZW Coachman comes out and tells Necro and Klien that Toby has to prove his worth, so this match is worked sort of genially for something this brutal. Now like most Necro matches this had some absolutely insane bumps, Necro eats a powerbomb off a ramp, Klein gets back suplexed on set up chairs, Necro eats a DVD on a chair, but it isn't the bumps that really make the match. Both guys are really great at filling space between the bumps. Either by recklessly chucking chairs or exchanging haymakers, the middle stuff is better then the crazy shit. Still the amiability of it really hurts the match, I want to see these guys in a blood feud, that is when they will truly break out a transcendent match.

+++++

NEXT TIME! All that German and Canadian indie stuff- REVIEWED LIKE A MOTHERFUCKER!
I SWEAR!

+++++

8 FISTS IN THE FACE OF WRESTLING.
THE DEATH VALLEY PLAYAZ